

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00396 041155Z

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /010 W
----- 018807
P R 041054Z FEB 75
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2560
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 396

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FROM AMBASSADOR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, SY
SUBJ: CONSULATIONS ON SYRIAN AID

REF: STATE 24914 (NOTAL)

1. MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR REASSURANCES REFTEL ABOUT GOOD PROSPECTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL INITIAL \$25 MILLION PROGRAM FOR SYRIA. I HAVE MADE IT CLEAR AT ALL LEVELS OF SARG THAT THIS IS INTERIM APPROPRIATION UNDER CRA AND ADMINISTRATION WILL PRESS FOR APPROPRIATION TOTAL \$100 MILLION. WRAP-UP REPORTS ON WORK RECENTLY COMPLETED BY AID SURVEY TEAM OUTLINE OUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN A WIDE VARIETY OF PROJECTS IN SYRIA, PRINCIPALLY IN THE AGRICULTURAL FIELD. NONE OF THESE PROJECTS HAS YET BEEN COSTED OUT; DAMASCUS 0375 ASKED FOR ORGANIZATION OF SEVERAL US TEAMS TO COME HERE ASAP FOR MORE DETAILED STUDIES. UNQUESTIONABLY THE OVERALL PRICE TAG FOR THESE PROJECTS, NOT TO MENTION SYRIAN RECEIPT VARIETY OF HOPED FOR COMMODITY IMPORTS, WOULD EXHAUST FUNDS AVAILABLE EVEN IF THE ENTIRE \$100 MILLION SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FUND WERE AWARDED TO SYRIA, WHICH I KNOW AND HAVE TOLD THE SYRIANS IS NOT TO BE THE CASE.

2. SO FAR SO GOOD, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SCHOLARSHIP
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PROBLEM WHICH I COVERED IN DAMASCUS 0325. ON

THIS SUBJECT, HAVE TAKEN SOUNDINGS WITH OTHER KEY
MINISTERS AND FOUND THAT WITHOUT EXCEPTION NONE OF THEM
HAD BEEN CONSULTED BY KHADDAM BEFORE HE INFORMED ME
JANUARY 29 THAT "THE GOVERNMENT" HAD DECIDED TO DECLINE
OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, CITING AS REASON WE WERE HAVING
ABU DHABI PAY HALF ITS COST. I HAVE STARTED SOME BRUSH
FIRES WITH KHADDAM'S DIRECT COUNTERPART, DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, AND THE MINISTER OF
ECONOMY BY EXPLAINING FACTS OF CASE. HAVE
DETERMINED IT PREFERABLE AT THIS POINT NOT TO RAISE THE
ISSUE WITH ASAD, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH DABOUL,
BUT TO GIVE KHADDAM ROOM TO BACK AWAY FROM HIS INITIAL
POSITION. IT WILL BECOME CLEAR TO ALL CONCERNED THAT
WE WERE NOT TRYING TO DECEIVE THE SYRIANS AND HAD IN FACT
COMMITTED USG TO PAY THE ENTIRE COST OF 100 GRADUATE
SCHOLARSHIPS WITHOUT ABU DHABI PARTICIPATION. OUR "SIN"
WAS IN NOT TOUCHING BASE WITH SYRIANS IN FIRST PLACE.
I EXPECT FIND EARLY OCCASION REVIEW BIDDING WITH KHADDAM.
THE VIOLENCE OF FONMIN'S INITIAL REACTION ON WHAT IS FORTUNATELY
ONLY A SMALL ASPECT OF OUR AID PROGRAM IS A USEFUL
REMINDER TO ALL OF US THAT SYRIAN PRIDE AND SUSPICION
OF GREAT POWER "MANEUVERINGS" LIES STILL JUST BELOW THE
SURFACE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.

3. FOR ABU DHABI: URGE YOU NOT RPT NOT IMPLY TO
SHAYKH KHALIFA THAT SCHOLARSHIP PROJECT WILL GET
SUFFICIENTLY BACK ON TRACK TO ALLOW ABU DHABI PARTICIPA-
TION. I DOUBT THIS PARTICULAR PROGRAM WILL LEND
ITSELF TO TRILATERAL DEALINGS IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE
(ABU DHABI 0256).
MURPHY

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